



Delaware Early  
Learning  
e-news bulletin  
January 2013

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## **Early Learning Challenge News**

### **Delaware Readiness Teams are forming now!**

Do you want to join with other early childhood and school leaders in your community to advance children's school readiness? If so, the Delaware Readiness Teams may be for you! Local teams will include school and community leaders, early childhood providers, and families, and will build strategies and partnerships that assure its young children, birth to age 8, have the critical resources and supports to enter kindergarten ready to achieve early school success. 90% of brain development occurs before the age of five, creating 700 neural connections every second. Early experiences count - positive experiences enhance lifelong positive outcomes. The Readiness Teams will drive the development of strong new linkages between early childhood and the K-12 schools to improve young child readiness for school and for life.

Successful applicants will receive up to three years of support (up to \$1,000 for each team in the first year) to establish their Delaware Readiness Team, complete a community-based needs assessment and prioritize action steps to directly address the needs of families, schools, and early care/education programs. Delaware Readiness Teams will receive technical assistance, resources, and professional development to support their community's unique needs. As many as 20 Delaware Readiness Teams will be selected to participate in the first year's implementation phase, beginning in late April. The Delaware Readiness Teams initiative is sponsored by the Office of Early Learning in partnership with private foundations and corporations and is managed through the Delaware Early Childhood Center.

**To Learn More:** All are invited to come to the in-person informational sessions being held across the state during January and February. The information session schedule appears just below. If you are interested, consider taking an active role in the formation of a team or to help distribute this information to individuals and organizations that you know you might be interested in participating in a Readiness Team.

<b>January 14</b>	James Williams State Service Center, Dover	2:00-4:00 pm
<b>January 16</b>	Floyd Hudson State Service Center, Newark	3:00-5:00 pm
<b>January 17</b>	Woodlawn Public Library, Wilmington	2:00-4:00 pm
<b>January 22</b>	Georgetown State Service Center, Georgetown	2:00-4:00 pm
<b>February 25</b>	James Williams State Service Center, Dover	2:00-4:00 pm
<b>February 26</b>	Georgetown State Service Center, Georgetown	4:00-6:00 pm
<b>February 27</b>	Woodlawn Public Library, Wilmington	4:00-6:00 pm
<b>February 28</b>	Floyd Hudson State Service Center, Newark	2:00-4:00 pm

Applications are due on April 8, 2013 and must include the Delaware Readiness Team Community Application, the Delaware Readiness Team Composition and Letters of Commitment from each participant. More information can also be obtained from Sherlynn Aurelio at the Delaware Early Childhood Center, [saurelio@lf.k12.de.us](mailto:saurelio@lf.k12.de.us).

[DEL TEAM INFORMATION PACKET](#) - click on the link at left to see the entire Del Team information packet.

### **Office of Early Learning invites responses to Requests for Proposal (RFPs) for Three New Initiatives:**

The Delaware Office of Early Learning is pleased to release three Requests for Proposals (RFPs) - The Infrastructure Fund for Early Learning Programs; the Early Learning Leadership Initiative (ELLI); and the Compensation, Retention and Education (CORE) Awards - in support of high quality early childhood services for children and their families. The Office of Early Learning is looking for energetic, effective partners to take the lead on these important projects. The proposals must be submitted no later than February 15<sup>th</sup>, 2013.

These three initiatives are designed to fill important gaps in Delaware's efforts to achieve a quality early childhood system for its children, particularly those most at risk. Each is linked to participation in *Delaware Stars for Early Success*, the state's quality rating and improvement system. The projects, with a high level overview, are noted below, along with the links to the RFP where you can learn more:

- [Infrastructure Fund](#) - capital improvements and technology improvements for early childhood programs in Delaware Stars, including supports for child care programs as well as schools and public charters that wish to participate in Delaware Stars and to serve children with high needs.
- [Compensation, Retention and Education \(CORE\) Awards](#) - to members of the early childhood workforce employed by programs participating in Delaware Stars in order to reward and encourage more qualified, effective teachers.
- [Early Learning Leadership Initiative \(ELLI\)](#) - leadership professional development (open to all early childhood programs) and intensive coaching (open to program leaders participating in Delaware Stars) focusing on instructional quality, business practices, and public leadership for early learning and early childhood.

**Office of Early Learning Meeting with Providers:** In December, 2012, Harriet Dichter and Evelyn Keating met with members of the Sussex County Child Care Association (SCCCA) to talk about their work with young children and their families. SCCCA members and Office of Early Learning staff are in the photo below. SCCCA is comprised of a long-standing group of early childhood administrators who advocate for young children, quality services and access. Their members have worked closely with the Early Learning Action team of the Sussex County Health Prevention Coalition to identify and partner to address community needs. The Office of Early Learning has met with many providers over the past six months and will continue those meetings in the coming year.



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The Office of Early Learning looks forward to keeping Delaware's early childhood community up to date through this new monthly e-bulletin. To subscribe, *click on:* [Earlylearning@state.de.us](mailto:Earlylearning@state.de.us), *enter "Subscribe" in the subject line and hit send.* To give feedback or suggest a story, please call [302-577-5300](tel:302-577-5300) or email to [Earlylearning@state.de.us](mailto:Earlylearning@state.de.us).

## **Early Learning Partner News**

**Delaware Readiness Team partners** are critical for the success of this new initiative. Our thanks to Nemours Health and Prevention Services, PNC Bank and the United Way of Delaware for investing in the Delaware Readiness Teams initiative. The Rodel Foundation is a strong and highly valued supporting partner in this initiative.

**Our congratulations to Vivian Rapposelli, who** has been nominated by Governor Jack Markell to be a Delaware Superior Court Judge. She currently serves as Secretary of the Department of Services for Children, Youth and Their Families and in that role has been an outstanding advocate for children and families, including early learning and child development.

**Purchase of Care Meetings** are scheduled to be held by the Division of Social Services of the Department of Health and Social Services from 6:00 pm to 8:00 pm on the dates just below, with a light meal provided courtesy of the Office of Early Learning. Early learning and development program providers who currently participate in the State's Purchase of Care subsidy program or who may be interested in participating are invited to attend these meetings.

February 6 Adams State Service Center, Georgetown

February 13 Division of Social Services Office, Canby Park

February 20 DelDOT building, Dover

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## **Spotlight on Local Success**



Thomas A. Edison Charter School kindergarten teacher Andrew di Michele works with student Ny' Zhae Hines.

Each year, 8,500 children in Delaware enter kindergarten with a varying degree of skills. Schools, early learning programs, teachers and parents all want to know about the strengths and needs of children to provide effective learning opportunities and support successful linkages between the early learning and K-12 school systems.

The fall 2012 launch of the Delaware Early Learner Survey (DE-ELS) is part of an exciting new initiative in Delaware - the federally funded Early Learning Challenge - designed to accelerate the state's work to support children's school-readiness. The DE-ELS relies on kindergarten teachers' observations of students and their professional judgment of children's skills and development milestones. It focuses on the following areas: language and literacy development, cognition and general knowledge, approaches to learning, physical and motor development, and social-emotional development. The survey was conducted within the first 30 days of the school year to provide the best picture of the readiness of entering kindergarteners. "It's a valuable tool to determine what our students' abilities and learning styles are, and to measure their growth," said Edison Charter School kindergarten teacher Andrew di Michele, one of the 100 teachers statewide to implement the survey. "I'm more of an improvisational teacher, so it's given me structure for detail and organization." Named the state's Charter School Teacher of the Year for 2012, di Michele earned his bachelor's in philosophy and his master's in French and served as an adjunct professor at Tulane University in New Orleans before he began teaching kindergarten. di Michele volunteered to be a part of the first-year implementation for the Early Learners Survey, recognizing that the information garnered will be used to help both early learning programs and elementary schools throughout the state.

The state provided implementation support and resources to educators and schools through online guidance, customized individual assistance, and in-person training. "It's an advantage for us to

figure out what the baseline is, right when they step in, so we can put instruction and intervention plans in place," said di Michele. Teachers in the pilot were successfully able to survey more than 1,000 kindergarteners this year, meeting the first year Early Learning Challenge goals. Participating districts and charter schools included: Appoquinimink, Brandywine, Caesar Rodney, Cape Henlopen, Capital, Christina, Colonial, Indian River, Lake Forest, Laurel, Milford, Seaford, Red Clay, Woodbridge Academy of Dover, Delaware College Preparatory Academy and Newark Charter.

The information garnered from the survey will be used by the state to improve its supports for early learning programs, while also informing kindergarten instruction. Results are not being used in the decision of children's grade placement, nor will the data be made public. An advisory committee of participating teachers is working to revise the survey, while also recommending how the next cohort of teachers can better use the tool next year. The committee meets monthly. For OEL, it has been a privilege to work with such a committed group of educators. Their deep dedication and cooperation enabled the state to meet its Early Learning Challenge goals for its young learners this year. Next year, an additional 200 teachers will roll out the survey in their classrooms, and statewide implementation is scheduled for fall of 2014.

Thanks to DDOE for the contribution of this article.

## **Early Childhood Policy and Trends**

**0-5 and K-12 Alignment:** Julia Coffman from the Center for Evaluation Innovation and Kristie Kauerz from the University of Washington released ["Evaluation PreK-3"Grade Reforms,"](#) a paper about how to use evaluation at different stages in the development of a pre K-3rd grade effort. This brief spells out when and how to use evaluation, what kind of evaluation to use in order to maximize its utility and the type and level of evidence required from evaluation.



**Assessments:** In support of state quality improvement initiatives, a RAND study entitled "[Incorporating Child Assessments into State Early Childhood Quality Improvement Initiatives](#)" set out to confront challenges and identify options for incorporating child assessments into the design, implementation, and evaluation of QRISs and other quality improvement initiatives. Drawing on prior research and states' experiences, the study appraises the merits of alternative approaches and offers guidance to designers and policymakers seeking to improve ECE quality.

**Child Care:** The National Women's Law Center issued a [new fact sheet](#) entitled "[On the Edges: Child Care Assistance Policies that Affect Parents, Providers, and Children](#)" that discusses child care assistance policies that can have an impact on parents' access to affording high-quality child care and on child care providers' ability to support high-quality care.

**Common Core:** "[The Common Core State Standards: Caution and Opportunity for Early Childhood Education](#)," recently published by NAEYC, provides guidance on four main themes that were also used to develop and implement early learning standards in early childhood education. These are meant to highlight the potential contributions the early childhood field can make toward the implementation of Common Core learning standards in early elementary school through upper grades.

**Child Well-Being:** A new paper by Urban Institute researchers Julia Isaacs and Olivia Healy, "[The Recession's Ongoing Impact on Children](#)," examines three key indicators of children's economic well-being: the number of children living with an unemployed parent; the rate of SNAP nutrition assistance; and a predictive measure of child poverty. The First Focus Campaign for Children has released a [companion paper](#) recommending additional steps Congress and the President can take to strengthen protections for kids.

**Dual Language Learners:** The Alliance for a Better Community (AFABC) and colleagues nationwide have been working for the past several years to identify competencies needed by teachers to work effectively with young dual language learners. AFABC has recently held a webinar to announce the release of the competencies and support the importance of their use in individual, organizational, and systemic professional development efforts. The "[Dual Language Learner Teacher Competencies Report](#)" is a three-part publication that includes the aforementioned teacher competencies, an article (*Necessary Dispositions for Teachers Working with Young Dual Language Learners*), and a policy brief outlining policy recommendations needed to advance workforce development that is inclusive of the needs of dual language learners. PowerPoint slides from the webinar, explaining key points of the report and the process that led to the development of the competencies, are available to download [here](#).

**Early Language and Literacy:** The Language Diversity and Literacy Development Research Group at Harvard University has released the seventh and final issue of [Lead for Literacy](#), a series of one-page memos written for leaders dedicated to children's literacy from birth to age 9. This issue focuses on Literacy Curricula.

Toddlers with more developed language skills are better able to manage frustration and less likely to express anger by the time they're in preschool, according to a new longitudinal study from researchers at the Pennsylvania State University that appears in the journal *Child Development*. Read more [here](#).

**Leadership:** "[Playmakers: How Great Principals Build and Lead Great Teams of Teachers](#)" by Gina Ikemoto, Lori Taliaferro, and Erica Adams explores specific actions principals of high-performing schools take to improve teacher effectiveness and what distinguishes principals who lead high-performing schools from other principals. Although written for schools, this report can also be instructive for directors in ECE programs and state leaders working to improve program quality by closing the achievement gap and managing inequality.

**Workforce:** On December 17, the Council of Chief State School Officers (CCSSO) released a "call to action" on teacher quality: "[Our Responsibility, Our Promise: Transforming Educator Preparation and Entry into the Profession.](#)"

## **New Research**

**Achievement Gap:** A new analysis of federal K-12 education data that provide a deeper and more systematic look into students' ability to understand the meaning of words in context than was previously available from "the nation's report card" finds stark [achievement gaps in vocabulary](#) across racial and ethnic groups, as well as income levels. Researchers found that Mexican-American children between the ages of 2 and 3 demonstrated language and cognitive skills that were seven months behind those of white peers, whether they were assessed in English or Spanish. That gap lasted through the beginning of kindergarten. At the same time, however, researchers found that the social skills of these same children rival those of their white peers, despite tagging literacy and despite coming from more impoverished households. Read more [here](#).



**Autism:** A recent study looked at programs for preschool kids with autism spectrum disorders (ASD). They looked at ones made up of only kids with ASD, kids with ASD and other disabilities, or kids with ASD and typically developing kids. They found that some kids showed bigger gains in mental skills when they learned alongside typically developing peers. Read more [here](#).

**Child Neglect:** "[Acts of Omission: An Overview of Child Neglect](#)", a bulletin from the Child Welfare Information Gateway, addresses the problem and consequences of child neglect. The bulletin reviews definitions and strategies for assessing neglect, presents lessons learned about prevention and intervention, and suggests sources of training and informational support. Strategies for addressing neglect are included.

Young children who experience severe neglect bear the burdens of a range of adverse consequences, including cognitive delays, impairments in executive functioning, and disruptions of the body's stress response, says a [new Working Paper](#) from the National Scientific Council on the Developing Child. "The Science of Neglect: The Persistent Absence of Responsive Care Disrupts the

Developing Brain," explains why severe neglect can cause more harm to a young child's development than overt physical abuse, why neglect is so harmful in the earliest years of life, and why preventive efforts and effective interventions are so crucial in helping to ensure better long-term outcomes in learning, health, and parenting of the next generation.

#### **Head Start Studies Released by the Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation:**

- [Third Grade Follow-up to the Head Start Impact Study](#), a nationally representative evaluation of the federal Head Start program. The evaluation studied children who entered the program in the fall of 2002. The report presents impacts on children and families through the children's third grade year, as well as impacts on subgroups of children and families. The New America Foundation offers an analysis of the latest report [here](#).
- The Office of Planning, Research and Evaluation also released the latest [Head Start Family and Child Experiences Survey \(FACES\)](#), a periodic, longitudinal study of program performance. Successive samples of Head Start children, their families, classrooms, and programs provide descriptive information at the national level on the population served. With the exception of letter-word knowledge, Head Start children assessed in English score below norms across cognitive areas, including language, literacy, and mathematics. However, in all areas these children progress at a rate greater than their same-age peers.

**Health:** According to a randomized trial conducted by researchers at Umeå University in Sweden, giving babies born with a low birth weight iron supplements during the first 6 months of life appears to improve their behavior around preschool age, a randomized trial showed. Read more [here](#).

A new paper from the National Bureau on Economic Research entitled "[Long Run Impacts of Childhood Access to the Safety Net](#)" finds that having access to food stamps in early childhood has positive effects on adult outcomes years later, including health and economic self-sufficiency. Read more [here](#).

**Mental Health and Social Emotional Development:** A new study by researchers at the University of Iowa suggests that cuddling and closeness by a doting parent or parents in a child's infancy may make for better-adjusted kids later on in life. The study found that infants who formed a close bond with even one parent were less likely to have emotional or behavioral problems when they reach school age compared to children who didn't experience such relationships. Developing a special closeness with new research a parent appears to provide these benefits, with either the mother or father. They said their findings provide further evidence about the influence that family members have at the earliest stages of a child's mental and emotional development. Read more [here](#).

The U.S. Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) published a [Community Action Guide](#) that focuses on supporting infants, toddlers, and families who are impacted by caregiver mental health problems, substance abuse, and trauma. The goal of the guide is to help build responsive communities that respond sensitively to the needs of a family.

**Parent Involvement:** Recently released results from a 2011 Parent Involvement Survey, sponsored by the GE

Foundation, reported that larger numbers of parents of K-12 students wish to be more involved in their child's education but that many encounter barriers to greater parental involvement, for example, they do not understand school administration and are unaware of information related to their local schools. Read more [here](#).

A [pilot study](#) of the "Getting Ready for School" program, a parent-focused curriculum designed to help parents prepare their children for school among Head Start classrooms found that the curriculum, which emphasizes the active involvement of families, improves school readiness over and above Head Start alone.

**Professional Development:** The University of Chicago Urban Education Institute (UEI) and the Ounce of Prevention Fund released a new case study focused on their efforts to create Professional Learning Communities (PLCs) of teachers, administrators, and family support staff spanning the early childhood to K-12 spectrum. Members of the PLC represent expertise in teaching or supporting families at each developmental or grade level from infancy to 3rd grade. The intent of the PLCs is to create environments where practitioners take the lead in collaboratively studying and piloting effective, developmentally informed practices that prepare children for college, beginning at birth. The case study is accompanied by a video, teaching notes, and supplemental teaching materials, all co-produced by the Ounce of Prevention Fund and the University of Chicago Urban Education Institute (UEI). All of the materials can be found [here](#).

**Screening:** PolicyLab at The Children's Hospital of Philadelphia announces the [release of data from the Translating Evidence-based Developmental Screening \(TEDS\) study](#) in the journal *Pediatrics*. The study is the largest to date to confirm the feasibility and effectiveness of standardized developmental screening in urban primary care settings.

Three key findings from the study include:

- **Standardized developmental screening is feasible** in a busy, urban primary care practice.
- **Standardized developmental screening is effective** in identifying developmental delay. Children were almost twice as likely to be identified with delay if screened with a standardized tool.
- **Standardized developmental screening is not sufficient** to ensure children's receipt of needed services. Only 58% of children identified with delay were given a referral for Early Intervention services. Only 50% of referred children completed a multi-disciplinary evaluation, required to determine eligibility for services.

[To read more about the study and its implications, click here.](#)

The barriers to Early Intervention services, explored in a [recent paper](#) by PolicyLab's Manny Jimenez and colleagues, point to the need for increased coordination between primary care offices and EI administrators. PolicyLab proposed a model for this coordination in this recent *Evidence to Action* brief, [SERIES: An Integrated Approach to Supporting Child Development](#).

## Practice Tips



Dressing for winter is a great way to practice school readiness skills with children. Helping toddlers on up learn to put on their coats, hats and mittens or make decisions about what clothing is needed for the weather are activities that subtly set them on the road to school success. Our definition of school readiness includes children's health, social and emotional well-being, motor development as well as academic and language skills.

Here's how putting on those winter clothes, with adults' help and guidance, helps children learn in all of those areas that are also indicated in **Delaware's Early Learning Foundations for Infants and Toddlers and Preschoolers:**

### **Physical Development and Health:**

**Health Awareness and Practice:** Together, determine whether heavy pants and shirts or sweaters are needed to match the temperature outside. Talk about how clothes help people stay warm and healthy.

**Fine Motor:** Encourage children to put on their own gloves or mittens. Young children can practice unzipping jackets while older children can begin to zip.

### **Social Emotional:**

**Self Awareness and Self Concept:** Develop children's independence and confidence by helping them put on their own coats using the flip flop method. Lay the coat with the opening facing up and the tag near the child's feet. Have him/her bend over and put his /her hands and some of his /her arms in the sleeve openings. Then, have him/her flip the coat up over his/her head while keeping his/her hands in the sleeves. Next, have him /her push his arms all the way in. *For younger children, they can remove their coats or jackets instead.*

### **Language and Literacy:**

**Expressive Communication:** Build vocabulary by using different words to describe winter shoes (boots, galoshes, overshoes or talk about different uses for boots (wading, mud, snow). View and describe the differences between mittens and gloves.

**Discoveries and Mathematics:**

**Problem Solving and Patterns:** Line up mom's, dad's or sister's gloves or hats to compare size from biggest to smallest or match the pairs.

**Discoveries and Science:**

**Memory and Scientific Knowledge - Earth and Sky:** As you are helping your child dress for the weather, ask, "which kind of weather do you like better - "Summer when it's warm or winter when it's cold? Do you like summer when we can go swimming or winter when we can play in the snow?"

**Discoveries and Creative Expression:**

**Dramatic Play:** While dressing for outdoors, ask these fun, imaginative questions, "If you could make your own winter coat, what color would it be? Would it be long or short? Would it have a hood? Would you have matching gloves or mittens? *(Later in the day, ask your child to draw his/her imaginary coat and matching accessories or write in a journal.)*

**Books to read with children about dressing for winter:**

The Hat: Jan Brett

Missing Mittens: Stuart J. Murphy

The Jacket I Wear in Snow: Shirley Neitzel and Nancy Winslow Parker

Warm Clothes: Gail Saunders-Smith

Thomas' Snow Suit: Robert Munsch

Clementine's Winter Wardrobe: Kate Spohn

